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THE IMPERIAL GALLERY OF THE HERMITAGE.

III.

BY CLAUDE PHILLIPS.

NOT the least sensible loss sustained by England when the Walpole collection was carried off by Russia was that of the unique series of seven finished sketches in oils, all from Rubens's own brush, giving the designs for the triumphal arches and temporary decorations erected upon the solemn entry into Antwerp of the Cardinal-Infant, Don Fernando de Austria, only brother of Philip IV. of Spain, after the victory over the Swedes at Nordlingen. The remaining sketches belonging to the same series are to be found in English and other private collections, and in the Museum of Antwerp. Nowhere is the wonderful facility and decision, the inexhaustible fertility of the master, more victoriously displayed. But to return for a moment to the domain of sacred art, in which several things of importance remain to be noticed. In many ways the most beautiful of all Rubens's Madonnas is the "Virgin and Child" (painted about 1515), which was acquired from the Crozat collection. Both in this piece, and in a similar but much inferior "Virgin and Child" which subsequently entered the Hermitage from the Galitzyne collection, the model is Isabelle Brant, as later on it will almost invariably be Hélène Fourment. The Crozat picture shows the Madonna in a brilliant red robe with a blue mantle lined with mauve-pink. The picture is marked by an unusual tenderness and naïveté throughout, especially beautiful being the caressing and trustful action of the fair-haired child Christ as He affectionately strokes the cheek of the Virgin. Something unusual for this period is the little shirt of white linen in which He is clothed, and this suggests that the work may have originally been destined for nuns.

“The Virgin Presenting a Cope to St. Ildefonso” is the sketch, or rather the finished design, for one of the most famous works of Rubens—the great altarpiece painted in or about 1632, at the command of the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, for the chapel of St. Ildefonso in the Church of St. Jacques at Brussels, and now one of the chief glories of the Imperial Gallery at Vienna. Here, much as in the remarkable sketch for the “Elevation of the Cross,” in the collection of Captain Holford at Dorchester House, we find the artist painting on one unbroken surface the composition of which he will subsequently, with the inevitable alterations and suppressions, make a triptych. The “Head of a Franciscan Monk” serves to recall one of the most genuine inspirations of Rubens, the “St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata” of the Cologne Museum—a picture which would enjoy a much higher celebrity were it placed in a gallery more frequented by the ordinary traveller. The St. Petersburg head is evidently—as M. de Somof points out in his catalogue—a life-study for the figure of the saint in ecstasy in the great canvas just mentioned. A quieter but a more penetrating pathos informs those works of Rubens which illustrate the legend of the gentle St. Francis than is discoverable in the flamboyant and splendid pages, in which, with a passion genuine and ardent of its kind, yet for all that superficial, he has depicted the Passion of Christ. His “Death of St. Francis” in the Antwerp Gallery is in many important respects his master-work in the domain of sacred art. A Walpole picture is also the sumptuous full-length of Hélène Fourment, the exceeding beauty of the execution in which entitles it to be considered one of the very finest—if not, indeed, the finest—of all the avowed portraits of Rubens’s second spouse. The already exuberant charms of the youthful lady, the worship of whose very earthly loveliness filled too great a place in the last ten years of his life, are much more reticently displayed than in such portrait-studies—of extraordinary *intimité*—as the “Hélène Fourment in a Pelisse” of the Vienna Gallery and the wholly undraped “Andromeda” which from the Blenheim collection has passed to Berlin. As in the portraits at The Hague and Munich, as well as in the two renowned canvases which, coming from Blenheim, now occupy places of honor in Baron Alphonse de Rothschild’s Paris residence, Hélène stands forth the Flemish lady of well-defined position, attired with exceeding mag-

nificence, yet with a certain moderation controlling splendor. She has evidently been trained by her illustrious consort to support by her dress and demeanor his own artistic and official dignity, while displaying to the utmost advantage the beauty of which he is to be to the very end the willing slave. Apt as are all women in such matters, she has, moreover, learnt her lesson well.

Some of Van Dyck's very finest work is at the Hermitage, and it may safely be said that nowhere is the exquisite accomplishment in every successive phase of his technique, or the aristocratic charm of his manner, more convincingly impressed upon the beholder. In thus acknowledging the unsurpassed beauty of the group of Van Dycks at the Hermitage, one need not be unmindful of the noble series of portraits to be found both at Munich and at Cassel, of the altarpieces and works of sacred art at Antwerp and elsewhere in Flanders, of the magnificent portraits and pieces in several styles at Madrid, of the vast riches in this direction of the Louvre, or of the Van Dyck Gallery at Windsor, which in its full illustration of the English period must be deemed unique. Let it not be forgotten, moreover, that no survey of the art of Rubens's greatest pupil would be complete without the most careful study of Prince Liechtenstein's gallery at Vienna, of Earl Cowper's pictures at Panshanger, of the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, of the Van Dycks at Wilton House, at Petworth, at Althorp, at Dorchester House, and in many another English collection. Monsieur de Somof is to be applauded for boldly cataloguing as a Van Dyck—in accordance with the opinions of Dr. Bode, of Berlin—the splendid "Isabelle Brant," which so long passed as a Rubens and even now, by M. Max Rooses, the biographer-in-chief of the great painter, is strenuously claimed for him and denied to his pupil. The deep yet ardent note of the coloring, the characteristic exaggeration in the rendering of mouth, nostrils, and eyes, the brown flesh tints—all these things point to the initial stage of Van Dyck's career, when, before riding away to Italy to mature his art, but to temper and abate under outside influences the fiery ardor of his genius, he did work of a promise which not even the perfect achievements of the later time quite carried out. We must class with this portrait the superb group "*Suzanne Fourment et sa Fille Catherine*," which, as the title indicates, represents an elder sister of Rubens's spouse, Hélène, whom we see

also in the famous "*Chapeau de Paille*" (or *Poil*?) of the National Gallery, as well as in a half-length in the Louvre. The likeness to the plumper and more blonde sister is unmistakable, but there is a marked resemblance to Rubens's first wife, Isabella Brant, who, be it remembered, was the aunt of the two younger ladies. The right name was first given to the sister by M. Max Rooses, who, nevertheless, claims for this canvas, as for the "*Isabelle Brant*," the authorship of Sir Peter Paul himself, and deems that the master is here seen completing the work of a pupil. The attribution to the youthful Van Dyck is in this instance still further confirmed by a comparison with the pair of beautiful portraits, unquestionably belonging to his first time, which adorn the Stroganoff collection in the rococo palace of that name on the Newski Prospect at St. Petersburg. These represent, in two companion canvases, personages who are supposed to be Nicholas Rockox, his wife and children. They show the same firmness of accent, the same crisp, feverish touch, the same strong impasto in certain passages which are to be noted in the "*Isabelle Brant*" and the "*Suzanne Fourment*" of the Hermitage. There will be, as the writer imagines, a general assent to the opinion that the large *Vierge aux Perdrix*, or *Vierge à la Fronde d'Anges* (Walpole collection), is the most beautiful of all Van Dyck's sacred subjects. It shows with a happy grace and naïveté which the painter has well known how to combine with dignity and a reverent spirit, the Virgin seated under a fruit-tree and holding the little Christ on her knees. The little St. John and seven boy angels dance joyfully in a ring, smiling to the answering smile of the infant Saviour. Overhead affrighted partridges take wing—a minor yet distinctive peculiarity from which the picture has been named. The reminiscence of Titian, the influence of his large, gracious manner in sacred art, is so evident as to require no emphasizing. All the same, the "*Vierge aux Perdrix*" is too unmistakably Flemish and too unmistakably the master's own to be placed in the special class of the Italian Van Dyck avowedly imitated from the splendid Venetian. It was done for one of the Princes of Orange, and must belong to the time immediately following upon the return of the youthful master to Antwerp at the close of his fruitful journey through Italy. Of the four extant repetitions, or copies, by far the best is one, of considerably smaller dimensions, which hangs in the Pitti Palace, and just be-

cause it is there, is better known to the picture-lover than the original. This, though it is much weaker in execution than the Hermitage picture, may indeed be the earlier version, since the conception is far more Titianesque. In the Suermondt Gallery at Aix-la-Chapelle is an original sketch which, from internal evidence, proves itself to be a preliminary study for a portion of the picture.

The "Portrait of Lazarus Maharkysus, a physician of Antwerp," though it must have been painted in Flanders, still shows the deep, rich, solemn color and the poetry of conception which mark the portraiture of the Italian period. Very interesting, as bearing the signature of the artist and the date 1629, are the pendant portraits, "Adriaan Stevens" and "An Aged Lady." It is with considerable surprise that one finds the learned director stating in the catalogue of 1895 that the "Portrait of Van Dyck in Youth" is not from the hand of the artist, but the free copy of a lost original. The St. Petersburg picture, which bears a resemblance, by no means, however, amounting to identity, to the auto-portraits at Munich, in the Academy of Fine Arts at Vienna, and in the collection of the Duke of Grafton, is unquestionably an original painted with great ease and breadth, though without much solidity, and giving a more realistic version of the young painter's individuality than he generally favored the world with. It is only fair to M. de Somof to add that it is his intention—verbally expressed to the writer—to restore this portrait to Sir Anthony in the next edition of his catalogue. The Van Dycks which came to Russia with the Walpole collection are not all of equal value. For instance, in the stately full-length "Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby," the treatment of the head is hard and cold, very little recalling the artist's usual manner. In the full-length "Sir Thomas Wharton"—a good though not a very interesting *portrait d'apparat*—the hand of Van Dyck's best pupil, Dobson, is very apparent. The two pendant full-lengths, "Charles I." and "Henrietta Maria"—the Stuart King being in armor and his queen *par exception* in a robe of crimson satin—are again not as absolutely first-rate, or as exclusively Van Dyck's own, as the best portraits of his royal patron and his family usually were. These portraits are all of the same exceptional interest, if only because they appear in the famous list of pictures not paid for, sent in by Van Dyck to the King in

1639, when he was already in financial straits, and by Charles considerably cut down before he satisfied his favorite artist's claim. The Hermitage full-lengths appear respectively as "*Le Roi en armes, donné au Baron Warto*" (Lord Wharton) and "*La Reyne au dit Baron.*" They were charged £50 apiece, but the King, in a fit of parsimony or pique, took £10 off the price of each picture.

The "Portrait of Inigo Jones" (Walpole Collection), is a work which Englishmen might legitimately desire to see in the National Portrait Gallery. Painted with the utmost solidity and care, it yet suggests somehow that the brilliant Antwerper was but moderately interested in the personality of his accomplished sitter, the greatest of English architects, with the sole exception of his successor, Sir Christopher Wren. The most beautiful portrait by Van Dyck in the Hermitage, and one of the most popular of all his works of this class, is the three-quarter length "Lord Philip Wharton" (Walpole collection), painted in 1632, when the sitter was some nineteen years of age. He appears here in a landscape, richly yet simply dressed in a steel-gray doublet, with a mantle of dark yellow falling from his right shoulder, the background being partly filled by a drapery of rich, dark green. The delicate, sensitive beauty of the youthful face has in it nothing effeminate, though there is—as in the likenesses of Van Dyck himself, and in those of so many among the youthful sitters in whom he delighted—excess of sensibility. Here is a veritable cavalier of those who so willingly gave up lands and laid down life for the King. Remembering even the "Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart" in Earl Cowper's collection at Panshanger and that essentially different portrait—a group of the same young noblemen in the Earl of Darnley's collection at Cobham—remembering, too, the "Prince Maurice and Prince Rupert" of the Louvre—the writer still ventures to record his opinion that the "Lord Philip Wharton" is Van Dyck's most exquisite creation in a phase of portraiture in which he has never been surpassed. To find a presentment as exquisite in sensitiveness and feeling, as accomplished in the portrayal of aristocratic youth at that the interesting moment between adolescence and manhood, one must go back to Giorgione and Titian, conjuring up the "Young Man" of the former in the Berlin Gallery and the Giorgionesque "*Jeune Homme au Gant*" of the latter in the Louvre; or one must recall, as a type of youth more haughty and

resolute, the so-called "*Portrait d'un Sculpteur*" by Angelo Bronzino, in the last-named gallery. To a later time in the English period must belong the hardly less delightful picture, "William II. Prince of Nassau," showing Charles I.'s son-in-law at the age of twelve years or thereabouts.

Adrian Brouwer is fairly but not splendidly represented at the Hermitage by four originals, of which one is the repetition of a picture in the incomparably fine collection of the artist's works to be found in the Alte Pinakothek at Munich. This ardent realist, who often surpassed Teniers himself in passionate truth to nature, as in richness of color-harmony, is not as yet represented in the National Gallery of England. Fortunately both the Wallace collection and the Dulwich Gallery contain first-rate examples of his powers. We cannot pause on the present occasion to notice the works of Gonzales Coques, of Craesbeeck, of Gaspard de Crayer, or even of Jordaens, though the intensely vigorous and exuberantly fleshy art of this Fleming, who was never actually Rubens's pupil, as has been generally assumed, is represented by a number of important examples. Let us pass on to David Teniers the younger, who is represented here as he is in no other collection in the world. No less than forty-three specimens of his wonderful craftsmanship hang in a section specially set aside for them of the gallery devoted to the later Netherlandish schools. If the truth must be told, the brilliant executant does not pass unscathed through such an ordeal as this. He by no means consults Nature on every occasion at first hand, but contents himself too often with skillfully dishing up, with insufficient variety if with unfailing technical charm and power, a number of well-worn types, incidents, and landscapes. One example there is of transcendent beauty and quite exceptional character, to find a parallel for which it is necessary to recall the greatest triumphs of Netherlandish art dealing with the corporate and municipal life of the cities. This is the large and elaborate composition, "*Les Arquebusiers et les Membres des Corporations d'Anvers*," painted originally from the Archers of St. Sébastien d'Anvers. It was before the Napoleonic wars in the collection of the Landgrave of Hesse at Cassel, and passed next into the gallery of the Malmaison, whence, with a great number of works of price, chiefly by Netherlandish masters, it was sold by the Empress Josephine

to the Emperor of Russia. Teniers, putting aside for the occasion his humor—generally thinner and more forced in quality than that of the true Dutchman—assumes here without effort the superb gravity which all Netherlanders alike were seemingly able to put on when they approached a subject like this one, which, outwardly prosaic as it might seem to the casual observer of to-day, was eminently calculated to recall the national struggles and the national glories. Teniers here rivals on a smaller scale, and with a finish for which the Haarlem master rarely strove, the sharpness and brilliancy, combined with solidity, of Frans Hals. One of the most interesting features is the background with an elaborate representation of the *Grande Place* of Antwerp in front of the Hôtel de Ville.

The greatest attraction of the Imperial Gallery, the one in virtue of which it can claim a certain uniqueness, even among the finest museums of Europe, is after all the unparalleled group formed by its Rembrandts. The mere mention of the Hermitage at once sets the Rembrandt student, as well as the connoisseur with wider views, longing to see its extended series of examples by the Leyden master, among which are included some of his finest works. M. de Somof's catalogue shows forty paintings classed as his, irrespective of the "Christ and the Woman of Samaria," quite recently discovered by him. Making the fullest allowance for a scepticism well founded in a very few instances, we may put the number of authentic Rembrandts at the Hermitage at thirty-six or thirty-seven, while the Stroganoff, Youssoupoff and Davidoff collections in the Russian capital contain, in addition, between them six or seven first-rate examples. Cassel and Paris come next in order, but lag far behind in point of numbers. After these galleries precedence belongs about equally to Berlin, the British National Gallery, and Dresden. Munich and Vienna, the Liechtenstein Gallery in the latter city, Buckingham Palace and the Wallace collection in London, and, last but not least, the series brought together of late years by M. Rodolfe Kann, of Paris—all these are notable gatherings of famous works by the master who is just now occupying the whole world. It has been thought best to keep quite separate in this enumeration the Ryks Museum of Amsterdam, with its two world-famous pieces, "The Company of Captain Frans Banng Cocq (The Night Watch)" and "The Syndics." The Her-

mitage, splendidly, unsurpassedly representative as it is, a little lacks those Rembrandts to which all our sympathy as well as all our admiration is given. It has nothing that quite answers to "The Pilgrim at Emmaus" and "The Good Samaritan" of the Louvre, to "The Vision of Daniel" of the Berlin Gallery, the "Hannah and Samuel" of the Bridgewater Gallery, the "Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph," at Cassel, or to that pearl among Rembrandt's landscapes, "The Mill," at the Marquis of Lansdowne's seat of Bowood. Still, take it all in all, the St. Petersburg pictures constitute the most remarkable group of the master's works to be found in any permanent collection. This is not the place to enumerate them one by one, or to discuss critically the one or two canvases in respect of which some doubt has arisen. The "Descent from the Cross" of 1634 equals in grandeur and intensity, while it far surpasses in completeness, the smaller but entirely similar picture painted in the preceding year (1633) for Prince Frederick Henry of the Netherlands, and now at Munich. "The Incredulity of St. Thomas" of 1634 shows the violence, allied to a certain vulgarity of expression, which we find not infrequently in the ultra-dramatic works of the earlier time. Famous is the so-called "Jewish Bride" of this same year, which has been very generally—though not with the assent of Dr. Bode, one of the highest authorities on the subject—identified as Saskia, the much-loved wife of the master. The Duke of Buccleugh possesses a very similar, yet in the composition and working out, quite different "Jewish Bride" or "Saskia," dated 1633, which artistically may claim to take even higher rank. But the masterpiece of the earlier time, and one of the masterpieces of painting, is the wonderful "Danaë," which Dr. Bode, relying on the technique, dates as early as 1636. The unique strength and delicacy of the tone—the charming chord of color, composed of pallid flesh, silvery gray and infinite variety, and the greenish gold of a portentous *barocco* state-bed—the nervous vigor, combined with high finish, of the execution, make of the "Danaë" one of the greatest things in art. Rembrandt triumphs here, for once, not by any overwhelming pathos, not by any divining power laying bare the secrets of humanity, but purely and simply as a supreme master of the brush. No element in the picture, apart from the wonderful tone and color, is in itself beauty—certainly not the sickly and repellent Danaë, certainly not the wondrously contorted bed,

with its tasteless excess of ornamentation. Yet the outcome is that beauty which results from sovereign accomplishment, and it is of the kind that no lover of painting proper can or need resist. Another masterpiece of nearly the same time (1637) is the fanciful portrait once known as "John III. Sobieski, King of Poland," a designation which the date of the warrior-king's birth—1624—at once proves to be absurd; for this truculent personage is at least thirty-five. Instead of casting about us for some Polish *grand seigneur* whom to identify with the striking swash-buckler in theatrically splendid attire who here delights us, we should perhaps do well to look upon it as a fanciful study based to a certain extent upon the artist's own features, but in which he has not been desirous of letting the world recognize as a matter of course his portrait. The maturity of Rembrandt's second manner is splendidly illustrated by the "Portrait of an Old Man," No. 820 (1645), which was formerly, on too slender grounds, identified as that of his friend, the learned rabbi of Amsterdam, Manasseh-ben-Israel. The lofty pathos which the painter so naturally evolves from his representations of patient and dignified old age is in but few works of the middle or later time more finely or convincingly expressed than here. The splendid study, or fantasy, of an armed figure (1650), called "Pallas," is the finest example of this type of glorified studio-exercise, in which an adequate excuse has been sought and found for the rendering of darkly gleaming arms and armor of a specially picturesque type. This "Pallas" is of the same class as, yet infinitely superior to, the Glasgow "Achilles" (or "Portrait of a Warrior"), which is an undoubted original, yet in many ways a superficial example of Rembrandt's later style in bravura. No less than three pathetic portraits of the same old woman, once erroneously described as "The Mother of Rembrandt," belong to the exceptionally prolific year, 1654; they bear the numbers 804, 805 and 806 in the catalogue of 1895. Of exactly the same period is again the richly toned and expressive "Potiphar's Wife Accusing Joseph" (1654). This is inferior in some respects to the Berlin example of the repellent subject, which came from Sir John Neeld's collection, and dates from the succeeding year, 1655. The latter is, perhaps, Rembrandt's greatest achievement in the domain of profound, jewel-like color. There are considerable differences

of design and expression between the two canvases. One of the most unusual and the most refined likenesses of women executed by the artist is the "Portrait of a Young Lady" (1656). A year or two anterior to these last-named pictures—Dr. Bode places it in or about the years 1650—is a sublime "Abraham Entertaining the Three Angels," one of those representations of biblical subjects which in their naïve simplicity, in their peculiarly human quality indefinably touched with the divine, are not to be paralleled outside the life-work of Rembrandt. Passing inevitably over a vast number of fine things of the later time, which, under other circumstances, would deserve careful examination, we come to the vast "Prodigal Son," which belongs to the painter's very last years, and well, if not with such absolute authority as is revealed in some other canvases of the same period, illustrates the width of view, the sympathetic power, the summarizing breadth of execution, of that moment. This most human and moving of subjects was only a less great favorite with Rembrandt than the "Good Samaritan" itself. It is through etchings and drawings, however, and much less through paintings, that he has in this particular instance expressed himself.

Elsewhere than in the Hermitage the representation of the greatest Netherlandish master of the seventeenth century, after Rembrandt—the reference is, of course, to Frans Hals—would appear more than adequate. In this collection, somehow, the Haarlem master, sharing with Rembrandt the same not very imposing gallery, makes but a feeble fight of it with his four canvases. The battle is, let it be borne in mind, not a fair one, and the great contemporaries must be more fairly matched before any comparison can be established—if, indeed, any master of the North, and of the same century, even this supreme craftsman, his contemporary, can for a moment be compared to Rembrandt.

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(*To be continued.*)